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S H A R E D

VIEWS

News and Information
for the Communities of the
Bitterroot National Forest

Volume 1

Issue 3



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We welcome your questions,
feedback or ideas! Please
contact Ellen at 375.2609
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with your newsletter input.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FOREST SUPERVISOR

The 2000 fire season began early in June and continued through late November. By the end of the season, 277 fire starts were recorded. In an average 10-year period, firefighters have been able to contain 98% of the fire starts before they spread to any significant size. Last year, firefighters were able to catch 86% of the fire starts. Considering the extreme fire conditions we experienced last year, this was a commendable success rate.

In the height of the season, more than 1,500 residents were evacuated from their homes, this included many Forest employees and local residents hired to support the firefighting efforts. When the fire season was "over", it was over for everyone except those whose homes and property were damaged or lost and the Forest employees who transitioned from fire suppression to fire rehabilitation and recovery.

We were then looking at the stewardship of natural resources for a 1.6 million acre forest that had been significantly changed. We needed to assess the impacts, priorities, needs, and alternatives to manage portions of the 307,000 acres in the burned areas. In order to meet the additional workload, new employees were hired on a time-limited basis to help us through the rehabilitation/recovery period. Specialists were hired in the fields of wildlife, fisheries, silviculture, fire, recreation and travel management, soils, and water. Together, there is over 500 years of experience in resource management dedicated to burned area recovery. These are people, who like you, enjoy the forest and the surrounding beauty of the Bitterroot valley. As they worked on the Burned Area Recovery Draft Environmental Statement, they not only relied on their own education and experience, but also conferred with other specialist and researchers working for other state and federal agencies. The DEIS considers the effects of various alternatives to manage portions of the areas that were burned during the 2000 fires.

The Bitterroot National Forest is dedicated to "caring for the land and serving the people." I am proud of the employees for the work they have done and continue to do.

Rodd Richardson
Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor



Photo: Koren Wattenmaker

Do you know the name of our
"cover" lake? Answer on page 4.

[We are] now
looking at
returning to
the stewardship
of natural
resources on
the remaining
1.2 million
acres that were
not affected
by fire...

Burned Area Recovery Draft Environmental Impact Statement Timeline:

Feb 2001

Release
proposal for
review and
comment

May 2001

Release DEIS
for public
review and
comment
(45 days)

Sept 2001

Release
final EIS

Oct 2001

Begin work
on accepted
management
decisions



Weed spraying
along Forest
trails on the
westside of the
valley and
some trails
along the
Selway River,
Hells Half
Acre Spring,
and Salmon
River began in
the latter part
of June and
will continue
through
July 22nd.
Contact your
local Forest
Service office
for locations
and dates.

STATE AND FUNDS PROGRAM

Early this past spring program initiated and non-commercial wildfires. After fence to cover other infrastructure demonstrate a public \$700,000

to more landowners in the Bitterroot Valley for their losses.

feet or 91 miles of fencing have been either repaired or replaced. Some infrastructure losses such as bridges, culverts, and gates were also covered.

According to State and Private Forestry staff officer Nan Christianson, "Many private non-commercial and commercial landowners were insured for some of their losses and others were not covered at all. This program provided assistance to qualifying applicants, either reimbursing what insurance policies wouldn't cover or reimbursing for complete losses when there wasn't insurance coverage." Said Christianson, "The State and Private Forestry program's goal is to provide meaningful support to non-industrial forest landowners and resource dependent rural communities."

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

By the end of June, nearly 1200 commercial mushroom permits had been purchased. The mushroom harvest could last until the end of July as long as there is enough precipitation.

FIRE TOURS ARE BACK!

The Bitterroot National Forest is once again offering guided field tours of the Fires of 2000 to provide an opportunity to see what happened in the areas affected by the fires, view some of the natural recovery, and see some of the rehabilitation work that has been done so far.

The tours are free and offered on Thursdays and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pre-registration is necessary as there is a limit of 25 participants per tour. The deadline to register for the Thursday tour is 4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, and the deadline for the Saturday tour is 4:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

Participants meet at the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office in Hamilton at 1801 N. 1st Street by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the tour. Bring a sack lunch and wear appropriate clothing. This is an auto tour with some stops. To make a reservation, call the Forest Headquarters at 363-7100. If you need any special assistance please notify the office at the time of the seat reservation.

United States
Department of
Agriculture



forestry was able to provide \$700,000 to more than 50 private landowners in the Bitterroot Valley for their losses. A total of 480,662

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Last year, Congress and the Administration developed the National Fire Plan as a result of three studies focusing on past fire seasons, current wildland management priorities, and the 2000 fire season that affected communities across the country. The Plan recognizes the need to

reduce catastrophic wildfire threats by calling for action and funding in five key areas: Firefighting, restoring landscapes and rehabilitating burned areas, reducing the risk of fire, assisting communities, and coordinating and monitoring the Plan's activities.

On the Bitterroot National Forest the National Fire Plan funding has provided funding for 28 new fire management positions which will greatly enhance fire suppression and fuels management activities of burned areas, reduce fuels to mitigate the threat of large fires in close proximity to private lands and dwellings, to provide wildland fire equipment to local rural fire departments, and to work with neighboring landowners in fuels reduction projects that will enhance property protection during wildfire events.

Further information regarding the National Fire Plan can be found on the Internet at:
www.na.fs.fed.us/nfp.

RECREATION

The Bitterroot has numerous hiking trails that will take you along the divide along the Sapphire range, or into glaciated canyons of the Bitterroots, or to high elevation vistas, or deep into the Wilderness.



Whether it's a short day hike or overnight backpacking excursion, there's a trail out there to fulfill your desire. Snow levels have receded greatly but there is still snow across most of the high elevation passes. Trail crews are currently working on trail maintenance and many trails have been partially cleared from winter/spring storm debris. Be prepared for additional debris on trails if you head out after a recent storm.

Three trails, ranging from one tenth of a mile to four tenths of a mile, are accessible for individuals with physical limitations. The trails, Lake Como North trail along the north shore, Centennial Grove trail 12 miles up Skalkaho Highway 38, and Spring Gulch campground trail located in the

Spring Gulch campground are all paved. Contact any Bitterroot offices for trail conditions.

Wildflowers are in abundance providing colorful landscapes and great photo opportunities. Remember, if you pick and gather, it won't be there for others to enjoy!

Indian Trees campground is closed due to construction improvements. It is expected to reopen with full services late July or early August. All other campgrounds are open and those providing services are fully operational. Campground information is available at all offices.

FIRE AND YOU

Last year's fires are still fresh in our minds and because of current conditions, many valley residents are nervous about this fire season. Historically, fire in the Bitterroot Valley is a common occurrence. If we get lightning with little or no precipitation or if someone is careless, we will have fires this summer.

If you haven't already done so, it's a good idea to take a good look at your property and evaluate how susceptible it is to fire. If you live right next to or in close vicinity to forested or brush lands your home and property are at risk. You can call the Natural Resources Conservation Services at 363-1444, extension 5, to make arrangements for a representative from the Wildland Urban Interface Task Force to come out to your property to assess and provide advice on minimizing the risk of fire. There's an excellent website; www.firewise.org, that provides valuable information on how to reduce the risk of fire to your home and property.

If you see a new fire start on the forest or come across an unattended campfire, please report it as soon as possible to the nearest Forest Service office. Some hesitate to report a fire assuming it would have been called in already. It is better to have several calls on a new fire start or abandoned campfire than to have it reported after it has had a chance to spread.

If you plan to use fire in your land and vegetation cleanup activities, be aware of the weather forecast, check with your local Forest Service District office to see if you are required to have a permit to burn, and contact your local rural fire department or the sheriff's non-emergency dispatch office at 363-3033 to alert them of the location of your proposed burn.

Ladder fuels (the shrubs under taller trees) should be removed

Roof components should comprise a class A fire rated system. Chimneys need screens or spark arresters

Eliminate leaf clutter, remove dead and diseased wood and trim back branches which overhang the roof

When choosing a building site the best location is at least 30 feet back from any ridge or cliff

Prune evergreen trees 10 to 15 feet above the ground

Stack firewood well away from your home

Keep lawns watered and green

Driveways, gravel walkways and lawns act as fuel breaks between your home and out-lying vegetation

Maintain a distance of at least 30 feet from your home clear of dead wood and vegetation

Illustration by Ken Barned.
Courtesy of the Missoulian

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PERSONNEL UPDATE

Meet the Fire Response Team

As part of the implementation of the National Fire Plan, the Bitterroot National Forest has hired new employees to form a team specializing in fires/fuels, fisheries, wildlife, vegetation management, recreation/travel, hydrology, soils, resource management, and supporting staff. They will be working over the next 3 to 5 years to develop a strategy and work with communities and other agencies to complete projects to reduce the fire risk.

Currently, the team is supporting the Burned Area team, aka the Forest's South Zone National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) Interdisciplinary Team, in the research and preparation of the Draft and Final Environmental

Impact Statement for the Burned Area Recovery project.

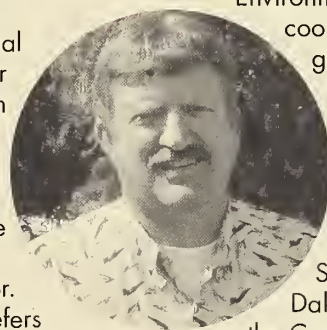
Most of these folks have come from other parts of the country bringing years of experience and knowledge to support the existing Bitterroot National Forest workforce.

According to Don Stadler, Fire Response Team Leader, "We are looking forward to working with Bitterroot Valley communities. Sharing ideas openly and listening to others' ideas is critical to our team's success." Over the next several months, the team will continue to assist with the Burned Area Recovery Environmental Impact Statement, but be on the lookout for their initial fuel reduction proposals this fall.

New Deputy Forest Supervisor

Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Rodd Richardson is pleased to welcome Lesley "Spike" Thompson as the new Deputy Forest Supervisor.

Spike, as he prefers to be called, will report to the Bitterroot mid-July. Spike has a bachelor of science in Rangeland Resources from Oregon State University and began his career in 1976 as a range conservationist on the Malheur National Forest in Burns, Oregon. Throughout his 25 year Forest Service career Spike has worked in recreation,



wildlife, as a National Environmental Policy Act coordinator, a range program leader, District Ranger on two Districts on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands and Custer National Forest, and acting Deputy Forest Supervisor and North Dakota Coordinator for the Custer National Forest.

Spike will be coming to the Bitterroot with his wife Carol and two high school age sons, Shay, 17, and Seth, 15. Spike and Carol have a third son, Shilo, 22, who recently graduated from college. According to Spike, "we are really excited and looking forward to coming to the Bitterroot."

Fires in the Bitterroot National Forest as of June 25, 2000—7 total:



6 human-caused, 1 lightning

Fires In the Bitterroot National Forest as of June 25, 2001—4 total:



2 human-caused, 2 lightning

SHARED VIEWS

News and Information for the Communities of the Bitterroot National Forest

Answer: "cover" photo :

Big Creek Lake.

Photo: Ruth Guttormsen

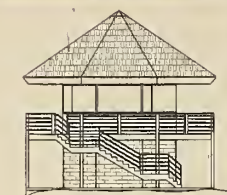
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THE SULA PEAK LOOKOUT

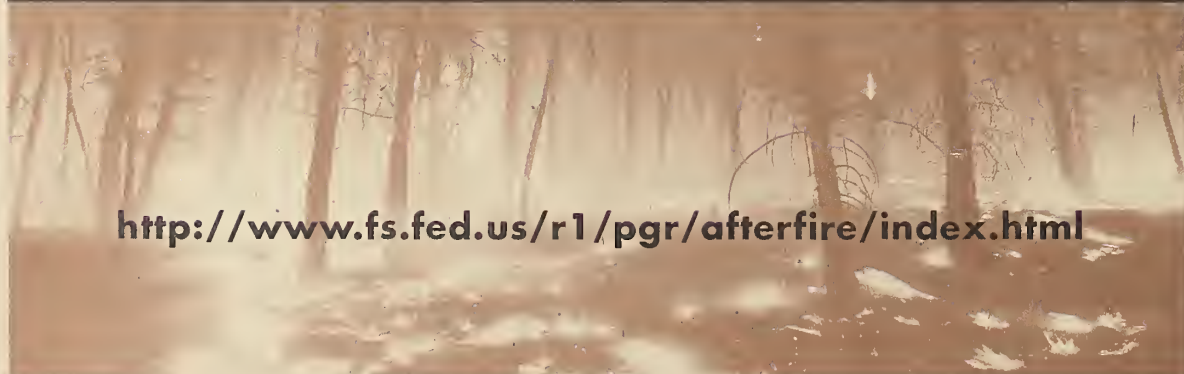
Progress is going well on the Sula Peak Lookout



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A NEW WEBSITE



<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/pgr/afterfire/index.html>

The Intermountain and Northern Regions of the Forest Service have a new website full of information about the fires of 2000 and the path towards recovery. You can log on to find out about the post-fire assessment, steps towards restoration and recovery, the National Fire Plan, and related links.

Check out these other hot websites too:

Bitterroot National Forest www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot

Lolo National Forest www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo

Living with Fire www.fs.fed.us/rm/fire_game

Firewise www.firewise.org



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